

COASTAL IMPACT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
REQUEST

1. Project Title: Coastal Wetland/Birding Trail Development
2. Entity Nominating Project: Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program
3. Contact Information: Kerry St. Pé
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BTNEP
P. O. Box 2663, NSU
Thibodaux, LA 70310
4. Total CIAP Funds Requested: \$200,000
(\$20,000/year for fiscal years FY07 and 08, and
80,000/year for fiscal years FY 09 and 10)
5. Infrastructure Funds Proposed: \$200,000
6. Description and Location of Project:

During the late 1990's, the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program began the process of establishing a coastal birding trail across southeast Louisiana which included participation by a number of state entities including the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism (LDCRT), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), members of the birding community from Baton Rouge Audubon, Orleans Audubon, and Terrebonne birding clubs, and local area tourism officials. Numerous sites were visited and evaluated for potential inclusion as part of the trail. A little later, LDCRT initiated the development of a state-wide trail across the Louisiana coast while simultaneously the America's Wetlands Campaign was looking to develop a coastal wetlands trail. In the end, all these efforts were combined into what is now the America's Wetland Birding Trail.

Since the establishment of the trail, BTNEP has been developing partnerships to construct components of the trail itself, specifically the construction of small boardwalks, observation platforms, small parking areas, and educational signage. We have developed partnerships with TNC to develop a boardwalk on the back side of Grand Isle plus the restoration of forest habitat on the Exxon property; a partnership with LUMCON to construct a boardwalk and observation platform in Cocodrie, LA; a partnership with Orleans Audubon and the Houma CVB to develop an observation platform, signage, and boardwalk in Chauvin, LA; a partnership with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to develop observation platforms and small boardwalks on the Pointe au Chene WMA; and a partnership with Plaquemines Parish and Woodlands Trail and Park to develop a trail and signage in Belle Chasse, LA. All of these sites are included as part of the America's Wetland Birding Trail.



FUTURE INTENT

The BTNEP program would like to continue the development of sites along the trail. For this reason, the BTNEP program is requesting CIAP funding. With CIAP funding, BTNEP funding, and other financial partners, we will focus our efforts in lower Plaquemines and Jefferson Parish at America's Wetland Birding Trail sites. We will also focus efforts in Lafourche, Terrebonne and St. Mary Parishes as well. This process will include working through the BTNEP's "Protection of Habitat for Migratory and Resident Birds" action plan team. This team will select sites from the

existing America's Wetland Birding Trail and use partner funds to provide access to these sites. This access will be in the form of small boardwalks, observation platforms, signage, etc.

In particular, this project allows for the implementation of several action plans of the BTNEP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan including EM-15 "Protection of Habitat for Migratory and Resident Birds" which calls for "...the development of a coastal birding trail for Louisiana and SR-3 "Citizens Involvement Programs and Activities" which calls for"...development of avenues to help citizens become more knowledgeable and committed to protecting the estuary."

7. Project Type:

Implementation of a federally approved
Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan.

8. Project Justification:

Louisiana's coastal habitats have suffered effects from many anthropogenic and natural factors. In particular, dredging of navigation channels to support onshore and offshore oil and gas exploration has caused the direct loss of our coastal habitats, while the construction of infrastructure to support these activities have had similar consequences. In addition, the increased subsidence rates associated with the sub surface withdrawal of mineral deposits have also taken their toll. And more recently, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have had devastating effects on many coastal habitats.

To promote awareness of the importance of Louisiana's coastal habitats including Louisiana's importance in the production of domestic oil and gas for the country, we submit this request.

In our efforts to promote the importance of coastal Louisiana to the nation, it is imperative that we provide citizens of this country the opportunity to experience these areas and learn both of their importance to humankind and the fish and wildlife that live here. It is through that experience where people will gain an appreciation for the importance of this area. If we fail in our efforts to provide that experience and the education of our fellow citizens, we can never hope to affectively address our coastal crisis, for it is a national crisis and as such, beyond what we can hope to do alone.

9. Project Cost Share:

The BTNEP Program has developed past agreements with numerous entities to help fund these projects in the past. Each year, the BTNEP program allocates up to \$30,000 for trail development. Thousands of additional dollars have been provided through these partnerships as well. The BTNEP program will continue to develop new partnerships as opportunities arise:

BTNEP partners and contributions for various trail development include:

Orleans Planning Commission	\$33,000
Plaquemines Parish	in-kind
Governor's Rural Trail Program	\$60,000
Orleans Audubon	\$10,000
LUMCON	in-kind

Houma Area CVB
BTNEP
Mandalay NWR
NFWF

possible funds for future project
\$200,000 + personnel time
personnel time to construct boardwalk
\$60,000